

BALTĂLUNGĂ, ADRIAN-AUREL (2008), *România. Orașele porturi dunărene: geografie umană și economică* [Romania. The Danube Port Cities: Human and Economic Geography], Cetatea de Scaun Publishing House, Târgoviște, 323 p., 78 illustrations, 18 tables, 50 photographs, 6 annexes.

Cetatea de Scaun Publishing House from Târgoviște edited a work that was much awaited by geographers and the general public, which was able to update the human and economic geographic components of a major element of our natural environment, the Danube. As it can be observed, Mr. Adrian Aurel Baltălungă fills this gap and, after extensive research, he offers us a comprehensive study on the Romanian port cities, such a work being rarely seen lately. The structure of the work, as well as the latest information and updated statistical data and the cartographic illustration also, give the book a highly scientific character.

The work is very timely because the Danube became the main trans-European fluvial thoroughfare linking the North Sea and the Black Sea – area that is too scarcely economically exploited and towards which the interest of Europe is channeling nowadays. This work represents the author's doctoral dissertation, being structured in ten chapters.

In the first chapter, the author presents and describes the main morphometric elements of the Danube and its basin, which favoured even since ancient times the establishment of population and settlements throughout its trans-European course. As a navigable river, its main tributaries are presented, the navigation sectors, as well as the main fifty-three Danube ports, from which eighteen are Romanian. The author summarises the history of research regarding the Danube, insisting on the modern and contemporary ones, when the role of commercial and cultural vector of this "king of European rivers" has greatly grown, then specifying, in the third chapter, the favourability and restrictive factors – which were



not few!, in the emergence and development of the Danube port cities, pointing out the essential elements from a historical and evolutionary perspective.

Chapters four and five refer to the generations of Danube cities and ports, as well as to the development of ports as a reflection of historical development and of economic cycles, having consequences on the stages of development and on the changes occurred in their functional typology. The author felicitously succeeded to synthesise the emergence of Romanian port settlements, both chronologically and documentarily, to capture their original function and its development in time, most of the times in a progressive way, even though it encountered functional discontinuities also. The text is supplemented with syn-

thetic maps and old images of documentary and evidentiary value.

A dense and extensive chapter at the same time is dedicated to portuary traffic, which is the most synthetic indicator of a port-traffic – showing that the Danube polarises a transport system with points of convergence, which are the ports, thus being a major European transport axis, on which sailing ships under the Romanian tricolour flag were seen since 1834. The author identifies and analyses in terms of characteristic periods the freight and passenger traffic in Romanian ports, often in relation to other ports, and effectuates a series of multi-criteria typologies and rankings, such as the general freight traffic, the goods routes index, the proportion of intern/international goods, the number of ships etc., considering periods of times that enable him to draw valuable conclusions. The studies on the structure of goods, the destination of goods, the evolution of the number of ships are very elaborated.

Regarding the passenger traffic, the author observes something we all felt without knowing the extent of figures, which is that the passenger traffic in Romanian ports decreased by 457,4% in 2002 compared to 1938! Sad and depressing considering that the human traffic provides the dynamism and the picturesqueness of places!

The author makes interesting comparisons regarding the positioning of Romanian ports relative to other Danube ports, the traditional links with other ports, as well as the major arrangement projects of the fluvial navigation channels: Rhine-Main-Danube, Danube-The Black Sea, Sulina, in order to facilitate these links. The chapter ends with the exhaustive and evolutionary presentation of the Romanian Danube cities, accompanied by images, figurative and synthetic plans, the information being extremely dense.

Taking as a starting point the Morill port development plan, the author shows in chapter seven, the existing link between the portuary activity and the level of socioeconomic development of the Romanian

port cities, successfully managing to highlight the correlation between population size and the level of socioeconomic development within their hierarchy (illustrations 56, 57).

The chapter “*Urban Morphologies Specific for Ports*” is also a “dense” chapter of study, in which the author regards the materialisation of demographic evolution and development of ports, which shows the specificity of each port. Urban population density, the size of green spaces, urban morphology, the organisation of industrial space are analysed. Depending on a number of criteria, such as geographical location, the complexity of functions and infrastructure, the port traffic volume, the loading/unloading capacity, the arranged area of ports, the storage capacity, the existent shipyards and/or the repair shops, the author created an entire series of Romanian port typologies, very current and necessary, transposed into synthetic maps also.

A particularly interesting and present alike chapter is entitled “*Urban Ecology of the Danube Ports*”. Since the Danube is a great source of water for the population and its activities, the author attaches importance to the quality of the river’s waters, indicating four quality categories which he analyses in a series of Romanian ports, insisting on the frequency variation of the inadequate samples. A much analysed matter was the one concerning the dumping of noxae into the Danube and in the environment related to portuary and industrial activities: domestic wastewater, industrial water, noxae, dust, as well as spontaneous or circumstantial pollution sources. Interesting facts are presented to the reader regarding the vulnerabilities of fluvial traffic in relation to the water level fluctuations following the periods of prolonged drought. I found the approach of the types of landscapes generated by portuary activities and of the images of port cities to be very synthetic and interesting, the author identifying geographical portuary landscapes of remarkable vitality, which is the case of the group Galați-Brăila, in a constant devel-

opment, but with great underlying possibilities, the case of Giurgiu, Tulcea, geographical portuary landscapes in different degrees of decline, where surprisingly ports such as Drobeta-Turnu Severin, Orşova, Calafat, Călăraş belong, thanks to the local crass indifference! But hope never dies, in the last chapter "*Trends of Development of the Danube Romanian Port Cities*" the author presenting the revival opportunities for some of the declining ports. The restructuring and adjustments in the Romanian economy included the Danube ports, the author identifying and materialising them in synthetic maps. A real possibility of revival for some of the Danube port cities is declaring them as belonging to the free portuary zones, about which the author undertakes an analysis at a regional level and into the past of some port cities, presenting afterwards the current free zones.

Having positive prospects regarding economic recovery, the ports Calafat, Turnu Măgurele and Călăraş stand out, which could become important bridgeheads across the Danube that are to be considered, afterwards contributing to the polarisation of transports and activities, while Orşova, Drobeta-Turnu Severin, Olteniţa, Giurgiu, Tulcea, Sulina have touristic potential.

In conclusion, the Danube Valley, as a polarisation axis for transport and activities, has great prospects for sustainable development, at a time when the Black Sea Basin as an economic region is of interest for the Central and Western European countries, the author highlighting its potential.

The dense and diversified information, the logical structure of ideas in the scientific endeavour, the clear, succinct and synthetic text, the high-quality cartographic material that harmoniously complements the text, are all attributes that make reading enjoyable and invest this book with qualities that are rarely incorporated in a single book. Every mature or becoming geographer should have this book, even more, I recommend it to all who are interested in the geographic and cultural Romanian space, to the general public. I find its translation in English to be very appropriate, which would prompt it, surely, to be one of the most appreciated books in this field.

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**Nicholas Clifford, Shaun French, Gill Valentine (eds.) (2012),
Key Methods in Geography, second edition, London, Sage, 545 p.,
ISBN 978-1-4129-3508-1**

Key Methods in Geography (with a first edition in 2003) is part of a series of excellent and well-known books (such as Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchin, Gill Valentine (eds.), *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, 2004 and Nicholas Clifford, Sarah L. Holloway, Stephen P. Rice, Gill Valentine (eds.), *Key Concepts in Geography*, 2003, and second edition in 2009).

The authors of the 32 essays (chapters) in this book offer a useful overview of geographical research from three distinct perspectives: how to plan, how to execute, and how to present research, while researchers are to pay attention also to issues of health, safety, and ethical research.